

# Contemporary Research Methods in Hospitality and Tourism

Edited by

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# **Contemporary Research Methods in Hospitality and Tourism**

The depth and breadth of hospitality and tourism research have gained significant momentum over the years as reflected in academic journals, books, and conferences. The scope and range of issues suggest that the topic of hospitality and tourism research is multidimensional, complex, and poses challenges and new opportunities for academics and practitioners. A book like this one “*Contemporary Research Methods in Hospitality and Tourism*” is timely and certainly contains novel research approaches and narratives that will not only facilitate our research undertakings but also empower us as researchers to be more effective and creative in the ways we generate knowledge and offer solutions. It is a must-have book for researchers and practitioners.

**Professor and Chair, Muzaffer Uysal,  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA**

The go-to guide for exploring contemporary research and methods in hospitality and tourism. In the ever-changing landscape of research, bringing great academicians together to share their expertise is the best way to dive deep into contemporary research and methods in hospitality and tourism and to get inspired for your research. The readers get a wide variety of compelling information from research paradigms and philosophies to survey design and qualitative research.

**Dr Cihan Cobanoglu, CHTP, Professor and Interim Dean,  
School of Hospitality and Tourism Management,  
McKibbon Endowed Chair & Director of M3 Center Muma  
College of Business, University of South Florida, USA**

Research methods are the foundation of quality scholarly work. This book not only discusses the bigger issues of research philosophies, ethics, and approaches but also the specifics of implementing rigorous qualitative and quantitative studies. Both new and experienced researchers could learn from this collection of materials as research methods continue to evolve and develop.

**Prof. Cathy Hsu, Editor-in-Chief of Tourism Management,  
Chair Professor, Hong Kong Polytechnic University,  
Hong Kong SAR China**

# Contemporary Research Methods in Hospitality and Tourism

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*Dedication by Fevzi Okumus:  
I like to dedicate this book to my graduate students and co-authors.*

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Fevzi Okumus, S. Mostafa Rasoolimanesh and Shiva Jahani*

### Abstract

This first chapter provides an overview of all the chapters included in this book. This book focuses on contemporary research methods in hospitality and tourism. Revisiting the traditional research methods is necessary for academia and practitioners in the hospitality and tourism field. New understandings and interpretations of traditional research paradigms such as positivism and interpretivism as well as more recent paradigms such as realism and pragmatism in the context of hospitality and tourism are vital to strengthen the research practices. We hope that the edited book can help researchers and practitioners in our field in their research journeys and applications.

*Keywords:* Research; methods; qualitative; quantitative; contemporary hospitality; tourism

This book focuses on contemporary research methods in hospitality and tourism. The hospitality and tourism industry has been one of the fastest growing industries worldwide with contribution of 10.2% to world GDP and 10% of job creation annually (UNWTO, 2018). Fast paced growth of industry highlights the importance of applied and pure research studies to address the theoretical and practical issues and gaps. Ryan (2018) highlighted the changes that are happening in this field:

(A) the changes in universities and the changing status of academics and the environment in which they work, (B) changes in processes of publication, (C) the change in tourism itself, which has grown in numbers and the different products on offer, (D) changes in the means of data analysis and (E) changes in information technologies.

(p. 196)

Therefore, revisiting the traditional research methods, to suit the contemporary issues and research agendas is necessary for academia and practitioners. In addition, in the era of technology and big data, advanced and innovative research methods and approaches are needed to conduct research studies to offer better explanations and solutions for the emerging issues in the field.

New understandings and interpretations of traditional research paradigms such as positivism and interpretivism as well as more recent paradigms such as realism and pragmatism in the context of hospitality and tourism are vital to strengthen the research practices. Moreover, there is a need for emerging recent research strategies under the umbrella of quantitative and qualitative research methods such as experimental research, using panel and secondary data, big data from sensors, smartphones, ethnography and netnography approaches, and analyzing the online reviews from online travel agents (OTA) platforms. This is even more evident when some recent studies revealed the shortcomings in application of survey as a most common research strategy in hospitality and tourism and highlighted the importance of relooking at the traditional research methods in the hospitality and tourism field (Dolnicar, 2018; Nunkoo, 2018).

This book covers various research methods to provide new insights for traditional paradigms, approaches and methods as well as recent developments in research methodology in the context of hospitality and tourism. Following this first introductory chapter, Chapter 2 by Martin J. Gannon, Babak Taheri, and Jaylan Azer offers critical discussions on research philosophies and paradigms in the context of hospitality and tourism. Chapter 3 by Fathimath Shiraania, Ismail Shaheera, and Neil Carra discusses research ethics for hospitality and tourism research. Researchers in our field often face multiple ethical dilemmas. This chapter aims to provide critical discussions on research ethics in our field by sharing critical reflections on the authors' ethical journeys. This chapter encourages researchers to be highly ethical in their research rather than simply conform to the minimal procedural requirements.

Chapter 4 by Bernhard F. Bichler, Tanja Petry, Andreas Kallmuenzer, and Mike Peters provides a roadmap for a systematic literature review. This chapter highlights the relevance and development of systematic literature reviews in tourism research. It puts the systematic review into perspective by outlining its characteristics and clarifying the methodological assumptions. In Chapter 5, Carles Mulet-Forteza, Juanabel Genovart-Balaguer, and Patricia Horrach-Rosselló cover bibliometrics method as an instrument that allows the analysis of evolution, current state, and future trends in a scientific field. Based on a review of the bibliometric methods, this chapter proposes a guide to help researchers undertake studies based on bibliometric techniques, both evaluative and relational. Chapter 6, by Cihan Cobanoglu, Luana Nanu, Olena Ciftci, Katerina Berezina, Muhittin Cavusoglu, and Faizan Ali, discusses the impact of embedded questions on survey response rate and quality. This chapter provides clear guidelines for increasing online surveys' response rate and quality. Chapter 7 by Sara Dolnicar discusses how to design a good survey. This chapter addresses a range of issues related to data validity associated with survey research and explains under which circumstances surveys represent a suitable or unsuitable method of data collection.

In Chapter 8, Lawrence Hoc Nang Fong explains how to conduct experimental research in hospitality and tourism. In particular, it discusses key issues in experimental design and provides insights about how to write a research paper based on an experimental research. Chapter 9 by Anna M. Stalmirska, and Raquel Camprubí and Chapter 10 by Kadir Çakar focus on qualitative content analysis in hospitality and tourism. These chapters discuss how to increase the trustworthiness of qualitative content analysis. Chapter 11 by Zilmiyah Kamble discusses different steps to structure a robust qualitative research study. This chapter addresses the need for qualitative research studies and discusses how to write a qualitative research methodology in a PhD thesis. In Chapter 12, Micol Mieli explores the use of Experience Sampling Method (ESM) in a qualitative research design. This chapter illustrates how this method can be used on participants' own smartphones, through various programmable applications.

Chapter 13 by Edwin N. Torres discusses the key steps and components of ethnography research. This chapter highlights the meaning and types of ethnographic research. Variations of ethnography such as netnography, chrono ethnography, and ethnographic interviews are explained along with their benefits and drawbacks. This chapter offers suggestions on how to conduct an ethnography including the scope, context, length of the project, access to and selection of informants, position of the researcher, issues of concealment or disclosure, and the language used to write the ethnographic narrative. Chapter 14 by Barbara Tomasella discusses abductive thematic analysis as an innovative qualitative methodology in hospitality and tourism research. The chapter further highlights the benefits of adapting thematic analysis to abductive reasoning, which is a paradigmatic position thus adding rigor to hospitality and tourism research. In Chapter 15, Emine Cihangir and Mehmet Şeremet provide a detailed account of the comparison-based case study approach and claim that traditional case study research should adopt the comparison-based case study approach. This chapter outlines the benefits and drawbacks of the comparative case study design. Chapter 16 by Denise O'Leary and David Coghlan discusses the importance and components of action research. This chapter provides an account of the theory and practice of action research. It provides illustrative examples of how this research approach aligns effectively with the themes that have currently received the attention of hospitality and tourism researchers.

In Chapter 17, Siamak Seyfi and C. Michael Hall discuss the steps to apply grounded theory (GT) in hospitality and tourism. By reviewing the development of GT and its associated philosophical underpinning, this chapter compares three widely used GT approaches advocated by Glaser (Classical GT), Strauss and Corbin (Straussian GT), and Charmaz (Constructivist GT). Given the various interpretations and approaches to GT, this chapter offers an overview of the key distinguishing characteristics of these approaches. In Chapter 18, JM Trapp-Fallon and Valeria Lo Iacono explain the benefits of oral history for tourism and hospitality research. The authors of this chapter state that many researchers are not as transparent as they should be about their method. Therefore, this chapter elaborates the reasons for and development of oral history technique and explains how this method can be used by researchers in hospitality and tourism.

Finally, Chapter 19 draws some conclusions and suggestions based on all the content and discussions presented in all previous chapters. We hope that the edited book will greatly help researchers in our field in their research journeys.

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## Chapter 2

# Contemporary Research Paradigms and Philosophies

*Martin J Gannon, Babak Taheri and Jaylan Azer*

### Abstract

Understanding the most appropriate research philosophy to underpin any piece of scholarly inquiry is crucial if one hopes to address research problems in a manner distinct from those already evidenced across extant literature. Distinct philosophical ideas and positions are often associated with specific research designs, therefore influencing the research approach adopted in any given study. Identifying an appropriate philosophical approach requires robust comprehension of how philosophical positions differ, alongside a reflective understanding of one's own perceptions and beliefs regarding what knowledge and reality "are" and how new knowledge is discovered, developed, and/or confirmed. This chapter therefore discusses different research paradigms and philosophies in order to identify core distinctions therein, highlighting the advantages and the challenges associated with different philosophical approaches to research along the way.

*Keywords:* Paradigms; contemporary research; research philosophy; services; hospitality; tourism

### Introduction

Irrespective of discipline, ideas and assumptions concerning the nature of knowledge and reality shape research design across the social sciences (Creswell, 2009; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012; Ryan, 2018; Tronvoll, Brown, Gremler, & Edvardsson, 2011). When understood and embraced, this "research philosophy" can be used to suggest possible means of tackling research problems, encouraging scholars to move beyond simply reiterating established approaches and ideas (Crotty, 1998; Greetham, 2006; Zyphur & Pierides, 2019). However, determining one's philosophical position requires an understanding of the distinctions between various stances, alongside reflective awareness of the inherent

assumptions researchers hold regarding knowledge acquisition and testing (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Accordingly, research aims and objectives are often predicated on assumptions regarding how knowledge is generated, with this typically dictating how and what will be unearthed through scholarly inquiry (Creswell, 2009). To this end, *paradigms, philosophical assumptions, epistemology, and ontology* (Table 1) combine to influence the most appropriate methodological approach (Crotty, 1998; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Hwang, 2019).

## Research Paradigms

Conducting robust research requires researcher awareness of the major philosophical assumptions underpinning their investigation. The “paradigm” a study falls within is shaped by the researcher’s views on how research should be conducted, both in general terms and specific to the study aim. It is used to inform the research methods adopted, research processes undertaken, and the nature and generalizability of conclusions subsequently drawn. To this end, Guba (1990, p. 18) contends that

[Paradigms] ... can be characterized by the way their proponents respond to three basic questions, which can be characterized as the ontological [different ways of understanding the nature of being], the epistemological [one’s world view and how this shapes what can be known about the world], and the methodological questions.

Accordingly, Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormiston (2007) highlight that different research paradigms yield different types and levels of understanding,

Table 1. Philosophical Assumptions.

Term	Definition
Research paradigm	Overall perspective on how research is/should be conducted. It is underpinned by philosophical assumptions (including ontology and epistemology) and informs methodological choice
Philosophical assumptions	A researcher’s set of beliefs holds about the research process, the nature of reality, and knowledge acquisition
Ontology	Combined philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality
Epistemology	Combined philosophical assumptions about the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired
Methodology	Techniques used to undertake scholarly inquiry

Source: Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), p. 18.

while also stressing that diversity in philosophical perspective does not counteract an external reality. In other words, “the argument should not be about which paradigm is superior, but rather the best to achieve the research aims” (Jennings, 2001, p. 135). As such, while researchers are advised to remain loyal to their chosen paradigm throughout their study (Kuhn, 1996), depending on the nature of their inquiry, there may be scope to adapt the nature of the investigation if a “multiparadigm” and/or “meta-triangulation” approach proves consistent with the aims of the research (Lewis & Grimes, 1999).

Accordingly, in clarifying the sentiment behind epistemology (i.e., the scholar’s relationship to the phenomena under investigation), philosophers focus on one core question: *How do we know what we know?* A range of answers to this question emerge from different schools of thought (Corry, Porter, & McKenna, 2019; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012), with this discussed at length later in this chapter. Similarly, *ontology* (i.e., the nature of reality) is relative, shaping both the research epistemology and subsequent deployment of research methods. The discourse surrounding methodological approaches typically centers on the differences between inductive and deductive reasoning, with deduction drawing from theory to identify “reality.” Theoretical foundations are therefore tested to explain cases consistent with common rules. Conversely, inductive reasoning involves developing conclusions from a range of phenomena experienced *as* reality (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). Easterby-Smith and Thorpe (1997) contends that cognizance of how philosophical foundations serve to shape research design is crucial, with this capable of encouraging researchers to (1) make informed decisions regarding methodological approach; (2) evaluate the range of research design choices and strategies consistent with their research aim; and (3) adapt assumptions regarding research design in order to increase the likelihood of generating meaningful results. With this in mind, the core foundations shaping paradigmatic choice are discussed in greater depth in the following sections.

## Ontological and Epistemological Position

The researcher’s previously held perspectives and presumptions regarding the nature of “reality” shape the approach underpinning any study (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). For example, research ontology is determined by how the researcher views reality (alongside the world around them more generally) and is primarily concerned with understanding the core question of “what is real?” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Thus, ontological discourse is principally contingent upon whether the researcher holds an objective or subjective perspective on the nature of reality, shaped by their position on whether social entities are objective with external reality to social actors, or considered social constructions from the perspective of focal social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Ontology and epistemology are often intertwined, with one’s ontological stance normally shaping subsequent epistemological assumptions and overall research positioning (Cope, 2003). For example, a researcher’s epistemological position stems from their central philosophical perspective on “how” knowledge

is generated and developed, alongside whether a given approach to knowledge creation is considered robust and acceptable within a given discipline (Audi, 2010). Therefore, research epistemology is driven by a context-cognizant desire to understand how knowledge is created, which helps researchers to identify the type of “proof” required to ratify it (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Accordingly, epistemology shapes research design, influencing how researchers explore reality, truth, and human nature, and knowledge creation is determined in part by the researcher-subject interface (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013).

Two core positions dominate discourse regarding how researchers can generate knowledge: empiricism and rationalism (Benton & Craib, 2010). First, a rationalist view is typically aligned with a positivist approach, favoring ontological objectivity, alongside hypothesis testing and verification, and is often concerned with the pursuit of generalizability thanks to its preference for large, representative samples (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). On the other hand, empiricism is underpinned by participant sense-making (Gioia & Pitre, 1990), echoing the interpretive view that both knowledge and reality are fundamentally socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). As such, research underpinned by empiricism focuses on the interpretation of data via dialectic and hermeneutic means (Lavery, 2003), allowing researchers to achieve greater personal insight into phenomena by drawing upon descriptive data in depth and detail (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Therefore, research framed by an empiricist approach typically draws from smaller sample sizes to attain a subjective understanding of phenomena under investigation (Fleetwood & Ackroyd, 2004). This often results in findings that cannot be easily generalized, with results instead capable of developing a broad understanding of the research context under investigation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

Yet, due to the multi-faceted nature of the hospitality and tourism industry and research conducted therein, no single study can exhume its nuanced characteristics in a complete or absolute manner. Therefore, the debate begins at an epistemological level, with quantitative and qualitative scholars often ignoring the other’s point of view (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). However, contemporary scholarship encourages researchers to ignore this adversarial view of philosophy, with a more holistic and balanced approach encouraged across the context of hospitality and tourism research (Olya, Van Niekerk, Taheri, Gannon, & Okumus, 2018). As such, hospitality and tourism scholarship has progressed, encouraging the widespread adoption of various perspectives and recognizing the value of studies approaching similar research problems from different philosophical underpinnings. Furthermore, no steadfast rules dictate the most suitable paradigm within a given discipline, with decisions concerning approach underpinned by the subjective interpretation of which research philosophy best reflects the research questions and scope. Nevertheless, the study characteristics under investigation should shape research design while echoing the researcher’s philosophical perspective (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). To better understand the different sides of this argument, this chapter introduces the most dominant philosophical stances in hospitality and tourism research, namely positivism and post-positivism;